

## Experience, depth at guard has Finn optimistic about Lady Saxons' chances

11/05/03

ALFRED The Alfred University women's basketball team looks to the 2003-04 season with confidence. Sixth-year head coach Michele Finn is encouraged by her team's experience (nine letterwinners, including three of five starters, return) and depth at the guard position (four returnees and several talented newcomers). "In this league (the Empire 8 Conference) of guard-oriented teams, I now feel we have the experience and depth to lead us where we want to go," said Finn. On a team with an abundance of guards, Finn does not overlook the importance of her players in the post. "Our goals will not happen without the leadership and hard work from our post players," Finn stated. To realize these expectations, Finn will look to senior tri-captain Allison Lass (Fulton/G. Ray Bodley) to lead the Lady Saxon's cause. Lass, a 6-1 center, has become an extremely mobile threat in the paint and will be a pivotal key to AU's success this season both offensively and defensively. Last season, Lass contributed in a reserve role due to Brandi Backus, last year's senior captain and center. "This year Allison will capitalize on scoring opportunities, dominate the post area and lead our team by example," added Finn. Another asset to Finn's lineup is junior 5-7 shooting guard and tri-captain Michelle Kelly (Levittown/General Douglas MacArthur). "Michelle is one of the quickest members of the team and has greatly improved at attacking the basket," stated Finn. "Kelly is an outstanding shooter, especially from the 3 pt. line." Kelly started 16 games last year and was the team's second highest scorer (7.3 points per game) and was tied for third on the team with steals, with 21. "I look for her to have an outstanding season and be our coach on the court," added Finn. Sophomore point guard and tri-captain Patricia Affeldt (Horseheads/Horseheads) will be counted on to provide leadership while stepping up her production on both ends of the court. She started 10 of 25 games as a freshman last year, averaging 3.3 points, 2.7 assists, and 2.4 rebounds per game. "Affeldt's aggressive style of play especially on the defensive end of the floor will help guide the Lady Saxon's overall team defense," stated Finn. Another key player returning to the Lady Saxon backcourt is senior guard Melissa Buck (Savannah/Clyde-Savannah). During the 2002-03 season, Buck started all 25 games and was second on the team in steals (35). She also recorded 6.9 points, 3.4 assists, and 3.3 rebounds per game. "Buck had an outstanding season last year but this year we want her to take on more of a role as a scorer," Finn said. Other members returning from last year's squad who saw significant playing time are forwards (and twin sisters) Tess and Meghan Coddington (Amherst/Southegan). The two combined for 9.4 points and 9.4 rebounds per game and added 39 steals. "They are both very good players and should contribute heavily this year at both ends of the court," said Finn. Also providing strength and depth are senior guard Brenda Mulligan (Earlville/Sherburne-Earlville), sophomore center Kylene Knoll (Elmira/Elmira Free Academy), sophomore forward Stacy Bradley (Cortland/Dryden), and junior forward Colleen Lyons (Oakfield/Oakfield-Alabama). Knoll saw action in 24 games and averaged 5.2 points and 4.1 rebounds. "I am excited about the players that will be in rotation this year. Brenda and Kylene are very strong players and understand the system. I also expect Stacy and Colleen to contribute heavily and make our front court solid," added Finn. Joining the Lady Saxons are several new recruits. Freshman guards Denae Foster (Canaseraga/Arkport), Lauren Mastin (Springwater/Wayland-Cohocton), Logan Polmanteer (Dundee/Dundee), Megan Sampsell (Corry, PA/Corry), Jessica Webster (Brighton/Brighton), and freshman guard/forward Gretchen Weidner (Eden/Eden) will be expected to make immediate impacts. "I am looking forward to seeing how the freshman develop. Foster is an exciting player and will see time at the two or three spot and Mastin is very quick and will play at the point. Logan is very fast on the court and likes to get in there and grab rebounds. I look for Sampsell to really step it up this year and contribute right away. Webster and Weidner will both see time at the two or three and are very coachable," stated Finn. "This year's team is working together for common goals and supporting one another. The girls are very encouraging and it is only a matter of time before we come together and grow as a team," Finn stated. The 2003-04 Lady Saxons expect to be competitive in the Empire 8 Conference, looking to grab one of the four berths to the conference's championship tournament. "I think our depth will keep us healthy all season so we can be right in the mix come February," stated Finn. "As a coach, you always feel optimistic about the season and this year is no different, except that the girls are buying into the plan and are really working hard. If this team continues to work hard and plays with a sense of urgency, I feel we can make a stir in the Empire 8 and ride the momentum at tournament time." --30--11-5-2003